

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
2441 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We respectfully request that you support increasing appropriations for our nation's poison centers from \$28,314,000 appropriated by congress in the Omnibus Appropriations bill to \$30.1 million for fiscal year 2010. This funding level is consistent with the Poison Center Support Enhancement and Awareness Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-377) authorization of \$30.1 million.

We believe poison control centers are our nation's primary defense against injury and deaths from poisoning. PCCs offer four major benefits to public health: cost savings, public health surveillance, quality patient care and emergency response.

Cost Savings

An Institute of Medicine study finds that every dollar spent on PCCs saves \$7 in healthcare costs. Poison centers are second only to childhood immunization programs in their ability to provide cost avoidance in public health delivery. A report in *Clinical Toxicology* shows that more than 80% of poison center callers avoid more costly and less accessible healthcare alternatives such as emergency departments, 911/EMS agencies, fire departments or urgent care centers. In the Department of Health and Human Service's Health Resources Services Administration Appropriation justification submission to congress for fiscal year 2009 they highlight that seventy-two percent of all poison exposure calls were managed on-site, avoiding expensive and unnecessary visits to health facilities which potentially saved \$1 billion in annual expenses.

Public Health Surveillance

The emerging need for public health surveillance and toxic surveillance has increased since the September 11th attacks and PCCs are able to provide real-time national data to local, state and federal agencies. PCCs have the ability to monitor drug and substance abuse threats, food/medication contamination, adverse effects of new and older medications, WMD threats, pediatric poisoning trends and waterborne disease threats. Immediate feedback in public health cases can mean saving many more lives. Health care facilities and practitioners also benefit greatly by observing patterns of abuse, contamination, adverse effects and illness in the population which enable greater ability to predict and anticipate direct patient care needs.

Quality Patient Care

PCCs offer more than just a one-time call to an answering service. Poison centers are staffed by nurses, pharmacists, physicians, and other highly specialized healthcare professionals such as toxicologists and Specialists in Poison Information. These healthcare professionals act quickly to determine the best solution to each case whether it is home management or a visit to the emergency center. The quality care doesn't end with the phone call. Poison control's follow-up with patients ensure that the continuing care of poison exposures are properly managed. The follow-up calls are a hallmark to the comprehensive patient care of PCCs.

Emergency Response

Funding at the authorized amount of \$ 30.1 million will support the nation's efforts for bio terrorism preparedness and response, as well as public health and our nation's emergency response capabilities. For example, during the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and the anthrax cases of October 2001 poison control centers were answering thousands of additional calls from concerned residents and were the country's source for accurate medical information. Cuts in funding would weaken our poison control center's ability to respond effectively to any future terrorist attack. Further, the 2001 Presidential Task Force on Citizen Preparedness in the War on Terrorism recommended that the PCCs be used as a source of public information and public education regarding potential biological, chemical, and nuclear domestic terrorism.

The following organizations support the fiscal year 2010 funding request:

American Academy of Clinical Toxicology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Poison Control Centers
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Medical Toxicology
American Medical Association
American Society of Hospital System Pharmacists
Association of Maternal and Child Programs
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Emergency Nurses Association
National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Directors
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Safe Kids Campaign
State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors

It is clear that poison control centers are a value to our national's public health system and should not be shortchanged this fiscal year. We respectfully request that you fund America's poison control centers at \$30.1 million in FY10 Labor Health Human Services-Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Lee Terry
Member of Congress



Bart Gordon
Member of Congress



Jim Oberstar
Member of Congress



Diana Res-Helmer
Member of Congress



Zanny Baldwin
Member of Congress



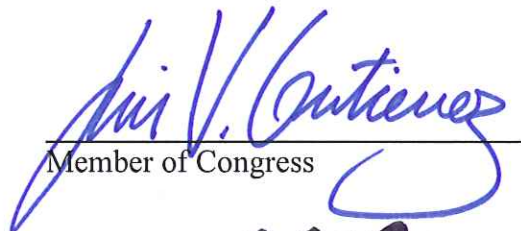
Bobby Lusk
Member of Congress



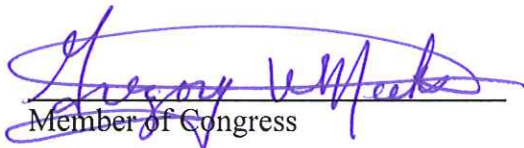
Ken A. Wagner
Member of Congress



Lincoln Diaz-Prado
Member of Congress



Jim V. Guterres
Member of Congress



Gregory V. Meeks
Member of Congress



Jim McRost
Member of Congress



Alcee Hastings
Member of Congress



Vernon J. Ehlers
Member of Congress



Shwartz
Member of Congress



Melissa J. Bean
Member of Congress

Sam O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Mike Simpson

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Marion Berry

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Robert Wexler

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James E. Cooper

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Charles E. Ziegler

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Mazie Hirono

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Sheldon Lee

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Lynn Woolsey

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Joe Baca

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Mary Jo Kilroy
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